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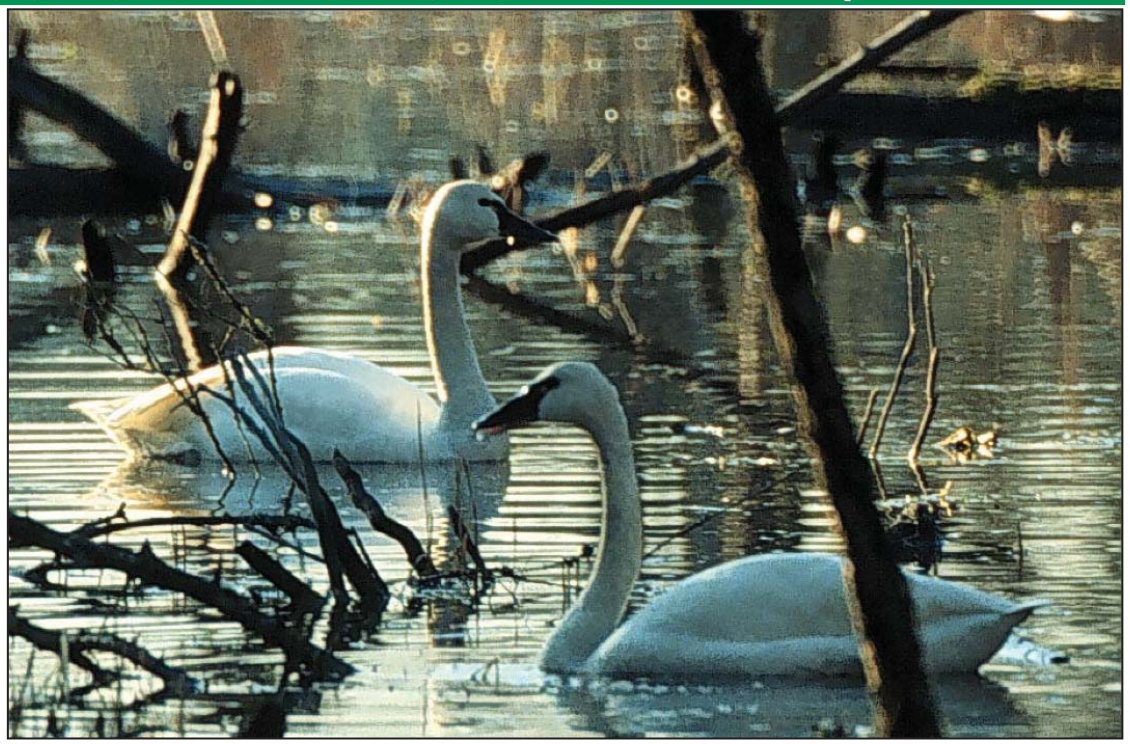
Searching For Sources of Lead Poisoning in Swans

Doug Williams



While it has been banned in the United States for more than a decade, the toxic legacy of lead birdshot continues to take a grim toll on visiting northern trumpeter and tundra swans in Skagit and Whatcom counties. "Research has shown that from the day a swan picks up lead shot, it will take about three weeks for that bird to die," said Mike Davison, WDFW wildlife biologist who is spearheading the Department's efforts to end the poisoning of swans.

The winter of 2001-02 was the deadliest on record, with an estimated 247 swans - 95 percent of them trumpeters - dying from lead poisoning in the two counties and adjacent portions of British Columbia. About 4,000 swans over-winter in Skagit County, with another 1,000 or so in Whatcom County.

The birds aren't being shot. Instead, the long-necked swans are ingesting spent lead shot that has settled onto the bottom of shallow lakes and ponds where the birds feed. The lead shot ends up in the bird's gizzard where the soft metal is ground up and slowly leaches into the swan's bloodstream.

The Department has teamed with Canadian fish and wildlife biologists, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Trumpeter Swan Society, the Bellingham Chapter of the Audubon Society, and the Pilchuck Valley Rehabilitation Clinic to identify the places where swans are ingesting spent lead shot, and finding ways of removing the poisonous material from the environment.

The main thrust of the work has been to collect more data on the birds' movements. A total of 26 swans - 19 in Whatcom County, plus seven in British Columbia - have been fitted with radio-transmitting collars that allow biologists and volunteers to track the birds' movements throughout the region, and possibly pinpoint the places where they're picking up spent shot.

Davison said the 26 collared birds were tracked to 50 different sites. Two of the collared birds died from lead poisoning, and their deaths led the biologists and volunteers to focus in on about 12 specific locations. The team has done preliminary core sampling at some of the sites of interest, and early analysis of the data is beginning to reveal lead shot sources, Davison said.

"Based on our early analysis, there appears to be a window of time when the birds are becoming exposed to the lead shot, so we'll focus our future research on the locations that the birds are visiting earlier during the time frame that they're in the area," he said. "Our goal for this coming winter is to try to get more collars on birds earlier in the season."

Davison said an intensive sampling effort of suspected lead-poisoning sites is outside WDFW's ability, given current budget and staffing levels. "We're looking to take the lead on all of the research work, while another agency or group could come in and facilitate the more-intensive core sampling effort," he said.

Non-toxic shot requirements were phased in over time, beginning in 1986, and ending in 1991 throughout the United States. Non-toxic shot has been required for all waterfowl hunting in Canada since 1999. Non-toxic shot is also required for public hunting areas that are used for both pheasant and waterfowl hunting, and includes all of the pheasant release sites in northern Puget Sound. Hunters are encouraged to convert to non-toxic shot for all upland bird hunting.

Lead-poisoned swans pose a health threat to other wildlife, including bald eagles, which feed on swan carcasses and can get secondary lead poisoning. Davison said two dead eagles found this year in the area are being tested for lead poisoning. "Potential secondary mortalities point out the importance of collecting sick or dead swans as soon as possible," Davison said. "The value of the rescue and recovery work that our partners do is immense."

Statewide Chronic Wasting Disease Sampling

Jerry Nelson, Deer and Elk Section Manager

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) was a hot topic of discussion for most western states in 2001. The disease affects the central nervous system of deer and elk and is found in wild deer and elk in north-central Colorado, southeast Wyoming, and a small portion of southwest Nebraska. In 2002, two new states were added to the list of having CWD in wild deer, Wisconsin and New Mexico.

The disease was first identified in the early 1970s but interest in CWD has increased markedly in the past few years. Once contracted, the disease is always fatal. Currently there is no test for CWD that can be performed on live animals. Brain tissue from the suspect animal has to be analyzed in a laboratory. The best source for samples are hunter-harvested deer and elk and fresh road kills. There has never been a documented case of CWD transferring from deer or elk to humans or from deer or elk to domestic livestock.

(continued on page 6)

Mandatory Hunter Reporting Results

George K. Tsukamoto, Wildlife biologist

Results of the new hunter reporting requirement established for the 2001 hunting season has improved the quality of data used by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to manage game species. "We thank all the hunters who reported their activity by the deadline date. The quality of information reported has helped our biologists to better manage future hunting seasons more accurately," said Dave Ware, WDFW game division manager.

Hunter report submissions were tracked by date to determine reporting timeliness, peak periods of reporting, and events that prompted reporting. During the hunting seasons, peaks in reporting occurred on Mondays following the weekend. An increasing trend in reporting occurred following the close of most general seasons in November through the "incentive" deadline of January 10, when a large increase in reporting was observed. The WDFW sent a reminder notice on January 15, 2002 to all hunters who had not reported. The reminder notice was effective when the largest number of reports received in a single day occurred on the deadline date of January 31, 2002. The number of reports received following the deadline was consistent but at a low level until a week prior to the permit application deadline, when there was a noticeable increase in reporting. The remaining hunters who haven't reported will be required to submit them prior to buying a hunting license for this falls general deer and elk seasons.

Table 1 shows the reporting results by species through the deadline date of January 31, 2002 and again on June 23, 2002. A significant number of hunter reports were received after the January 31 deadline date. From January 31 through June 23, 2002 about 41,000 hunter reports were received, representing approximately 12 percent of the total. These reports and others that we have not yet received would have been most valuable in our management analysis if they were available when we needed them. We are hopeful for even higher and earlier reporting rates for the 2002 hunting season as hunters become accustomed to the new procedures and take advantage of the incentive program.

The reporting rate for special permit hunters is much higher for goat, moose and sheep hunter reports (Table 1). Approximately 90 percent of the deer and elk special permit hunters submitted their reports on time and are included with all deer and elk hunters.

Last year, hunters who reported within 10 days of taking an animal and unsuccessful hunters who filed their reports by the end of the day on January 10, 2002, were entered into a drawing for one of nine deer or elk special incentive permits. Eight hunters from western Washington and one from eastern Washington were chosen to receive a special elk or deer permit for faithfully reporting their hunting activity in a timely manner. They have been rewarded with a hunting opportunity of a lifetime in 2002.

Table 1. Hunter report results for the 2001 hunting season

Species	2001 license (tag) sales	January 31, 2001			June 23, 2002		
		Reported	Not Reported	Percent Reported	Reported	Not Reported	Percent Reported
Bear	56,384	40,625	15,759	72.1	48,233	8,151	85.5
Deer	160,934	114,576	46,358	71.2	130,813	30,121	81.3
Elk	97,361	70,749	26,612	72.7	82,0691	14,670	84.9
Goat	26	25	1	96.2	26	0	100
Moose	94	91	3	96.8	94	0	100
Sheep	24	23	1	95.8	24	0	100
Turkey	32,996	19,582	13,414	59.3	24,524	8,472	74.3
Total	347,819	245,671	102,148	70.6	286,405	61,414	82.3

Game Management Planning

Dave Ware, Game Division Program Manager

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) began developing a management plan for hunted wildlife (game) about one year ago. The purpose of this Game Management Plan is to guide the Department's efforts for six years from 2003 to 2008. The emphasis will be on harvest management and those factors that limit or significantly impact game populations in this state.

In developing this plan, we have made an extensive effort to involve the public from the very start. We asked, what are the most important issues the WDFW should address in the next six years? The responses were categorized into eight key areas:

1. Scientific/professional management of hunted wildlife
2. Public support for hunting as a management tool
3. Hunter ethics and fair chase
4. Private lands programs and hunter access
5. Tribal hunting
6. Predator management
7. Game damage and nuisance
8. Hunting season preferences

In order to further refine what the public thinks about these issues, a private firm was hired to conduct a public opinion survey. The consulting firm, Responsive Management, conducted two surveys (spring 2002), one of the general Washington public and one of hunters. Following is a summary of some of the more significant findings concerning public support for hunting as a management tool and how they will be used to develop the first draft of the Game Management Plan. Articles on other areas listed above are found in this issue of Game Trails.

Public Support for Hunting as a Management Tool

With accelerating human population growth in Washington, a largely urban society, and two recent citizen initiatives that restricted lawful hunting or trapping techniques, many are questioning general public support for hunting as a wildlife population management tool. This issue was identified by the public as one of the most significant issues for WDFW to address in the Plan.

(*continued on page 5)*

New Deer Hunting Opportunities for Permitees, Youth and Disabled

Madonna Luers

Deer hunters, especially special permit holders, youth, and disabled, have a number of opportunities this year, particularly in eastern, northcentral, and southwestern Washington. That's where populations are most abundant, some to the point of causing agricultural problems.

Special antlerless deer permits, which were issued in early August after the application period concluded in late June, were increased in units where herds can sustain the additional pressure or need to be reduced to avoid damage problems.

The Steptoe (139), Almota (142), Mayview (145), Dayton (162), and Couse (181) units of the eastern region offered a total of 900 new or additional permits or special hunting seasons. General season buck hunters might take the cue that these areas could be productive, although private land access might still be a challenge (even landowners with damage problems often prefer limited numbers of doe hunters on their land.)

The Sinlahekin (215), Mission (251), Foster Creek (260), Beezley West (part of 272), and Wannacut (209) units in the northcentral region also added a total of 400 special antlerless deer permits this year, reflecting more than healthy populations in those areas.

The following opportunities were offered last year and are again available in the northcentral region; Wannacut (209), Sinlahekin (215), Chewuch (218), Pearrygin (224), Gardner (231), Pogue (233), Chiliwist (239), Alta (242), and Big Bend (248) units to the Oct. 12-20 youth and disabled modern firearm hunt for any deer that in the past included only the Foster Creek (260) and Moses Coulee (269) units. All of those units are also open for an any-deer youth and disabled archery hunt Sept 16-30 and muzzleloader hunt Oct. 5-9.

In the southwest region, 150 new special "any deer" permits for youth hunting were offered in the following units: East Klickitat (382), Lincoln (501), Stella (504), Mossyrock (505), Stormking (510), South Rainier (513), Packwood (516), Winston (520), Yale (554), Marble (558), Lewis River (560), Siouxon (572), West Klickitat (578), and Grayback (588).

Arrange Hunting Access Early

Perhaps the most important element in completing a successful hunt is pre-arranged access. Nothing is more disappointing or frustrating than when your best-laid plans fail because you haven't taken care of this one critical detail. Frantic calls made at the last moment usually aren't successful and only adds to the frustration. Even if you have had a long standing arrangement it is best to check in advance and make sure there are no surprises.

Preseason scouting is a good way to check things out. There are many opportunities to arrange access with landowners enrolled in the "Hunt by Permission" program. Look for the familiar sign with contact phone number posted on the property. Lands posted with "Feel Free to Hunt" signs may be hunted without contacting the landowner.

If you hunt on public lands it is always a good idea to make contact with the land manager in advance to determine if there are special rules in effect or if access rules have changed from the previous year.

Last year Weyerhaeuser Company restricted access onto some of their lands to weekends only. Of particular importance in this regard is the St. Helens Tree Farm, which supports major hunting recreation in some very popular Game Management Units. Increasing problems with vandalism and garbage dumping, and a concern about safety, bring about these changes. Other private timber owners besides Weyerhaeuser have also been placing gates on roads, many open only during general hunting seasons in the fall. This could affect hunting access for bear hunters and early archery deer and elk hunting seasons. Be aware some private lands require fee access. Call the Weyerhauser Company toll free access hotline for up to date information:

St. Helens Tree Farm Access Hotline
1-866-636-6531
Vail Tree Farm Access Hotline
1-800-361-5602 or (360) 446-3813
White River/Snoqualmie Tree Farms
1-800-433-3911
or visit their web site at
www.weyerhaeuser.com/recreation

Fire danger is high; many private timber companies may close access until the danger is eased. These closures, if implemented, are likely to affect bear hunters and early archery deer and elk hunters who would hunt in August and September. Hunters should plan accordingly.

Scientific/Professional Management of Hunted Wildlife

Dave Ware, Game Division Manager

Recent public opinion surveys conducted by Responsive Management in January-February 2002 shows that science and professionalism in game management is very important to the public. The use of scientific information and the judgment of WDFW professionals in management decisions are rated very high by both the general public and hunters surveyed. While less important than scientific information and professional judgment, economic and social concerns were also highly rated in making management decisions. The only factor that was poorly rated was political concerns.

It was especially gratifying that the public shows such strong support for the science and judgment that biologists provide. However, it is also difficult to determine what that support really means. For example, using foothold traps to capture furbearers is consistent with scientific management, yet a citizen initiative restricted the use of these traps. Similarly, a two-point regulation for harvest of black-tailed deer bucks in some western Washington units and a restriction against harvest of hen pheasants in eastern Washington have limited basis in biology yet are strongly supported by hunters. It is obvious that while science and professional opinion are important, social and economic issues often drive public opinion and ultimately, harvest regulations.

The take home message is that while professionals and science are important, a good public involvement process is necessary for people to make up their own minds. The key is to develop programs that achieve biological objectives and are supported by the public.

Development of hunting seasons and regulations are therefore one of the most important issues for hunters. During a recent public involvement process it was learned that timing and length of deer and elk seasons were a key issue. The WDFW will be initiating the process of developing hunting seasons and regulations for the next three years (2003-2005) that will include this expanded public involvement process.

Hunters surveyed indicated overall satisfaction with their hunting experience. Although eastern Washington pheasant hunters, waterfowl hunters, furbearer hunters, bear and cougar hunters, and even deer and elk hunter satisfaction could be better. Harvesting an animal (hunter success) and seeing plenty of game were the main reasons for satisfaction. Not enough game and dislike of the regulations or general management strategies were the main reasons given for dissatisfaction by deer and elk hunters. Eastern Washington pheasant hunters said not enough pheasants and few places to hunt were the two main reasons for their dissatisfaction. Others stated that not enough game, did not harvest any, too many hunters, weather was bad (waterfowl hunters), and dislike the regulations (especially furbearer, cougar, and bear hunters) were reasons for dissatisfaction.

It is fairly clear that harvest success plays a significant role in hunter satisfaction, yet when asked, hunters often rank ability to harvest much lower than things like hunting with friends and family, seeing game, low hunter density, etc. Specific responses to the hunter opinion survey on deer, elk, game birds, furbearers, black bear, cougar, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, moose and waterfowl management will be used to develop the next three year hunting season recommendations. The results of the opinion surveys will be posted on the Department Internet web site at www.wa.gov/wdfw.

Growing Elk Herds, Damage Problems Mean More Elk Hunting

Madonna Luers

Modern firearm season for any elk now includes part of the Three Forks (109) unit in the northeast and some additional days in the Kiona (372) unit of Yakima and Benton counties. The Chehalis Valley portion of the Minot Peak (660) unit of Grays Harbor County has been added to the three-point-minimum elk hunt in western Washington.

Growing elk herds and agricultural damage caused by elk mean more elk hunting opportunities across Washington.

Several adjustments have been made this year to the general elk hunting seasons and increases in special elk hunting permits to take advantage of healthier herds and to address landowner damage complaints.

Archers have gained some early season antlerless elk hunting in the Blue Creek (154) and Dayton (162) units of the Blue Mountains. Muzzleloaders have early season antlerless elk hunting in the Puyallup (652), Deschutes (666), and Skookumchuck (667) units of the Olympic Peninsula region.

Special elk permits, which were issued in early August were increased in units where herds can sustain the additional pressure or need to be reduced to avoid further damage problems. General season bull hunters might find some of these areas productive, depending on access.

The Naneum (328), Quilomene (329), and Teanaway (335) units of the southcentral region have new any bull permits in all user groups (modern firearm, archery, muzzleloader). The Malaga (032) and Peshastin (033) elk areas in Chelan County have a combined total of 230 new permits for mostly antlerless but also any elk, including some muzzleloader and archery opportunities.

Although there are no bull permits in the Dayton (162) and Tucannon (166) units in the Blue Mountains this year due to excessive poaching and higher than anticipated harvest, there are 50 new antlerless modern firearm permits and 50 new antlerless late muzzleloader permits in the Dayton unit.

There are also 100 new antlerless elk permits in a new late season in the Mashel (654) unit in Pierce County; 20 new permits for three-point-minimum bulls or antlerless in parts of the Willapa Hills (506), Fall River (672), and Williams Creek (673) units in the southwest and Olympic Peninsula; and 15 new any elk permits in the Selkirk (113) unit in the northeast.

The 2003-2005 Hunting Season Recommendation Process to Begin Again.

George K. Tsukamoto, Staff Wildlife Biologist

The time is fast approaching for Washington hunters to get involved in the next three-year hunting season recommendation process. The major hunting seasons and rules are modified on a three-year basis with annual adjustments to permit levels and hunts that address damage and nuisance problems. Public involvement is an important part of the process of establishing hunting seasons and regulations.

Based on public comments received over the past two years there are some issues that are sure to surface during this process.

- Resource allocation is a subject of much attention and continued comment by Washington hunters. The three major groups (modern firearm, muzzleloader and archery) all seek for increased opportunity and success. Other groups such as Advanced Hunter Education graduates, hunters with disabilities, seniors, and youth are also vying for more opportunities.
- Weapon and equipment restriction is an issue that has come under increased scrutiny from various segments of the hunting and non-hunting public. The recent debate surrounding "Roboduck" is a current example of differing opinions about advances in equipment technology, the appropriateness of hunting methods, and the more serious question about meeting the socially accepted standards of hunter ethics and fair chase.
- Antler point restrictions increased or decreased hunter days and permit-only opportunities are some of the strategies used in management of elk, deer and other game species. Some hunters are opposed to specific strategies such as these.
- Wildlife damage related issues are a major concern to hunters as well as agriculturists. Hunting seasons structured to relieve damage require considerable attention by the Department and the parties affected.

The Department has been expanding outreach efforts in soliciting public comment on hunting season alternatives through the Internet and will continue conducting public meetings and receive comments by mail. We encourage comments via e-mail, etc. during the development of the hunting season recommendation package. We also encourage continued public involvement when the recommendation package is finalized and provided to the Fish and Wildlife Commissioners for action in April 2003. The following is a preliminary schedule of key events for the 2003-05 Hunting Season Recommendation process.

The Three-year (2003-2005) hunting season recommendation process timeline.

Event	Who	Date
Initial Discussion	WDFW and Tribes	August/September 2002
Develop Alternatives	WDFW/Public	October/November 2002
Develop Draft Alternatives	WDFW	December 2002
Draft Release	Public	Late December 2002
Public Comment Meetings	Public	January, 2003
Final Recommendations	WDFW	February/March 2003
Public hearing and Adoption	Fish and Wildlife Commission	April 2003

Game Management Planning

(continued from page 3)

When the general public was asked a series of questions about support for hunting, it is apparent that overall support for legal, regulated hunting is very strong. One of the somewhat surprising findings is that over 30 percent of the public has participated in some form of hunting in their lifetime. This fact may influence general support for hunting.

However, there are some specific issues where opinions are very pronounced:

- In general there is less public support for hunting cougar, black bear, and furbearing animals than most other game species.
- Hunting for the purpose of obtaining a trophy was clearly not supported by the general public and hunting contests were opposed by a majority of both the general public and hunters.
- The majority of respondents from the general public did not support introduction of non-native species and were split on the release of game birds to improve hunter success, while a strong majority of hunters supported both of these activities.
- Sixty-four percent of the general public does not think it is the WDFW's role to encourage participation in hunting and while a majority of hunters do think it is the Department's role, a surprising 39 percent disagree.
- Somewhat surprising though perhaps related to the previous finding, was the general public's lack of support for providing special youth hunting opportunity, while a slight majority supported special opportunities for seniors. Hunters showed strong support for special opportunities for both youth and senior hunters.

So what do these findings mean in terms of WDFW management? In order to maintain public support for hunting, the Department should be sensitive to public opinion on these issues. A draft of the Game Management Plan is available for public comment through September 10, 2002. You can have a copy sent to you by contacting the Department's Wildlife Program at (360) 902-2515 or on our Web site at www.wa.gov/wdfw

Hunter Ethics and Fair Chase

Dave Ware, Game Division Manager

Hunter ethics and fair chase is closely related to the public's perception of hunters and may strongly influence future support for hunting as a management tool. This is also a very significant issue to hunters.

Equipment Technology

One issue that is being increasingly debated is the expanding use of technology for hunting. This is particularly evident with equipment technology. During development of the 2000–2002 hunting season package, weapon technology was extensively debated and regulations were modified for archery, muzzleloader, and modern firearm equipment. The most recent debate has been over the use of motorized waterfowl decoys, with Fish and Wildlife Commission action in 2001 that restricted the use of electronic waterfowl decoys.

Public opinion surveys conducted by Responsive Management in 2002, indicate both hunter and general public support for greater regulation of technology in hunting equipment. However, waterfowl hunters were equally split in support and opposition to regulation of electronic waterfowl decoys.

So what do these findings mean in terms of WDFW management? The Department plans to facilitate further public debate on technology regulation. Hunters have traditionally been aggressive at self-regulation in cases of fair chase.

Hunter Behavior

Another very significant issue for hunters is illegal activity and a desire for greater enforcement presence in the field. This is also a significant issue for the general public with the majority of opinion survey respondents feeling that a lot of hunters violate hunting laws. The general public felt that hunting without a license and poaching were the major violations with shooting game out of season and hunting over the bag limit also common violations. Hunters cited these common violations with the addition of shooting from a vehicle.

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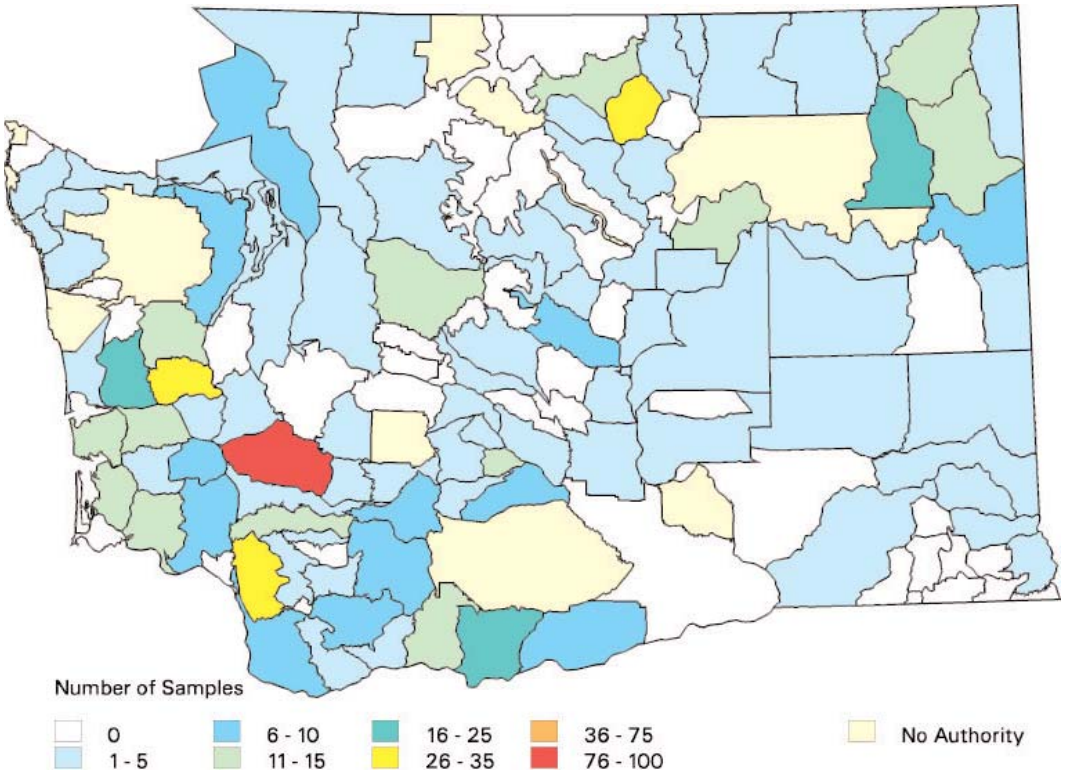

Chronic Wasting Disease

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In March last year, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) began planning an increased sampling effort for CWD in an attempt to get statewide coverage and much higher sample sizes. In September of 2001, the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) declared an emergency as a result of CWD affecting wild game farms. Special funds were made available to states that had confirmed cases of the disease in the deer and elk farming industry. When the disease is discovered in a captive herd of elk that herd has to be destroyed and disposed of and then the site has to be monitored. Quarantine, depopulation, and disposal of animals cost millions of dollars. An indemnity program was put in place by USDA to offset some of the losses that wild game farmers were experiencing as a result of this disease. In October the news broke that an elk farm in Colorado had tested positive for CWD and had, in the previous 5 years, shipped elk to 15 different states. Washington was not one of those states.

The Department had been conducting surveillance testing for CWD, which means any animal that showed any kind of unusual symptoms was tested as a precaution. The WDFW staff veterinarian, Briggs Hall, has been testing for CWD in deer and elk since 1995 but one man can only do so much. All of those animals tested negative for CWD.

Washington is a very low risk state. Washington law does not allow farming of deer and elk, so we don't have live animals being shipped around that could pose a risk, and we are far enough removed from Colorado and Wyoming that there is little chance of the disease spreading naturally to Washington.

To say with any kind of certainty that Washington deer and elk don't have this disease, WDFW had to start sampling at a much higher rate. Sampling on a statewide basis is expensive and time-consuming. Washington is on the list for Federal funding to help with testing but it became clear last year that those funds would be depleted fairly rapidly by states that have the disease or are in close proximity to the disease. Because it is a low risk state, Washington is also a low priority state when it comes to outside funding sources.

To get a much broader sample and higher numbers, the Department requested special funding from the state legislature to increase the effort expended toward this investigation for the first year. As a result, WDFW has completed the first year of a three-year sampling program to test for the disease. The first year went well, and the Department was able to meet the sampling goals. Hopefully we'll be able to meet those same goals in 2002 and 2003 if the funding is available. WDFW is trying to map the location of all samples collected to identify where effort should be directed for the 2003 hunting season.

The Department collected 785 samples in the past 4 months. When results come back from the laboratory there are three possible outcomes:
(1) Positive, which Washington has not seen to date, (2) Negative, and (3) Non-diagnostic.

In order to conduct the test successfully the animal can't have been dead too long before the brain tissue is collected. Deer or elk that have hung in hunting camp too long or road kills that are too old may be non-diagnostic. The testing laboratory cannot make a conclusive test on that sample. If a sample doesn't have enough of the right type of brain stem tissue it may also be non-diagnostic.

Last year's statewide effort was a learning process for all the Agency personnel involved. There were a lot of logistics that had to be worked out to sample at that scale and intensity. The Department also received a lot of support from volunteer organizations like Eyes in the Woods and Inland Northwest Wildlife Council. All of the people involved with this effort did a tremendous job. We haven't had any positive samples so far, and we hope that trend continues.

Hunters that harvest an animal in the endemic areas of Colorado will be required by Colorado Division of Wildlife to have their animals processed in the endemic areas. Check the Colorado Division of Wildlife web site before planning your next trip http://wildlife.state.co.us/CWD/index.asp. The same precautions are probably advised for other states.

Your help is needed in the effort to keep Washington deer and elk free of CWD. If you go out of state to hunt deer or elk, WDFW asks that you follow these guidelines:

- Bone out the meat, or have your game cut and wrapped, leaving behind the intact spinal column and the head.
- Do not bring back the animal's head unless it has been taxidermied.
- Make sure hides are clean of all tissue.
- Bring back antlers with no tissue attached. Clean skull plates attached to antlers with household bleach.

For more information, visit the WDFW website at:
http://www.wa.gov/wdf/wl/cwd/index.htm or call the WDFW Wildlife Program at (360) 902-2525.

Changes in Attitudes About Predator Management in Washington

George K. Tsukamoto, Staff Biologist

Predator management is a controversial and sometimes contentious issue in today's society. This is far different from the attitudes and actions of people in Washington at the dawn of the twentieth century. Back then it was a good thing to protect the desirable game species and domestic livestock from predators.

The prevailing values of the time are reflected in the first wildlife-associated bill passed by the Washington Territorial Legislature in 1871. This bill established a bounty for killing undesirable wild animals. A bounty of $2.50 was established for each cougar, panther, wolf and .50¢ for each coyote and wildcat. In 1879 the bill was amended to raise the bounty to $5 for cougar, panther, wolf, $4 for black bear, $2 for wildcat and 10¢ for muskrat.

In 1949 the bounty on the coyote was removed and special trappers were hired to reduce coyotes, at approximately the same cost. In 1950 Compound 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) was introduced experimentally in Okanogan County and subsequently used extensively to control coyote and other mammalian predators. In 1972, an Executive Order prohibited the use of Compound 1080 on federal lands.

In 1953 the Washington State Game Commission Eleventh Biennial Report stated, "The game manager has the same basic responsibility as the farmer to minimize any interference with the production of his crop. Farmers spray their crops against insects; game manager must also act against predators, which interfere with the production of the game crop. It is the policy of the Game Department to control game depredation as completely as possible…The Department's goal was never to obtain the largest number of animals possible for its record, but rather to minimize the amount of depredation to game and agriculture."

Today, public attitudes toward predators have changed dramatically. The payment of bounties on predators was eliminated in 1980 when the Washington State Legislature repealed RCW 77.24.010 - 120. There is a greater appreciation for predators now and some people have a desire to reintroduce large predators (wolves, grizzly bear, lynx) and protect them. Initiative Measure No 713, approved November 7, 2000 stated, *"The people of the state of Washington find that this act is necessary in order to protect people and domestic pets and to protect and conserve wildlife from the dangers of cruel and indiscriminate steel-jawed leghold traps and poisons, and to encourage the use of humane methods of trapping when trapping is necessary to ensure public health and safety, protect livestock or property, safeguard threatened and endangered species, or conduct field research on wildlife."*

In a recent public opinion survey in Washington several questions were asked concerning predator management in Washington

- In general it was found the hunters are more supportive of reducing predator numbers than the general public.
- Both the general public and hunters showed strong support for reducing predators to address human safety, protect endangered species, and to prevent the loss of livestock and pets.
- There was a significant divergence of opinion between the general public and hunters when asked about reducing predators to increase game populations. Hunters, as expected, showed strong support, though less than for all other purposes (prevent loss of livestock and pets, human safety, protect endangered species). The general population opposed (54%) predator control to increase game populations.
- Neither the general public nor hunters supported reducing the number of black bears to prevent timber damage and the general public opposed (53%) spring hunting seasons to control damage.
- Figure 1 (page 12) shows the responses between hunters and general population concerning specific actions to reduce predator populations.

When Do You Hunt-Morning, Midday or Evening?

Ray Croswell

If you could only hunt one time period during the day when would it be - morning, midday or evening? Most of us would tend to say mornings. I recently read an article in an issue of "The American Hunter" that posed several questions to a panel of hunters. One question really got me thinking about my experiences over the years. The question, "If you could only hunt one three-hour period a day for big bucks, what three hours would it be?"

My first thought was if I could only hunt one period of the day, it would be the first three or four hours of the day. Then I began thinking back on my past experiences. Over the years I have kept detailed records of all my deer kills, so back to the stat book I went.

Fifty-six percent of my bucks have been taken in the mornings, 23 percent of my bucks have been taken mid-day (10:00 AM to 2:00 PM) and 21 percent in the evenings. Like most hunters I do most of my hunting in the mornings, followed by evening hunting and the least hunted time would be the midday period. Yet, after studying my stats, I found that I have taken more bucks midday than in the evening and some of my midday bucks are some of my largest.

I took one of my nicer blacktails just before noon. My son Tom and I hunted a basin where I had taken several bucks in past years, but this morning was a bust. While hiking back out to the truck, I noticed a respectable buck feeding in a small opening on a ridge across the canyon about 1,000 yards away. When we got to where the buck was located the brush was so thick that we spooked him. It had snowed a few days earlier and there was still a little snow on the ground, so we started tracking him. After another 400 or 500 yards, we found him feeding on trailing blackberries. One shot at 20 yards and it was all over.

This buck was out feeding at noon and we all know that he should have been bedded down behind some old stump, but not today. Experience has taught me that deer will move around a little midday and if you are out there, being patient, you just might get your chance.

Recently while scouting mule deer in eastern Oregon I found a buck that I wanted to try to harvest during the upcoming season. He was living in a sagebrush basin where we found him during our summer scouting. I went over two days before the opener in an effort to locate him for a chance on opening day. As luck would have it, I was able to locate him right away. I watched the buck all day from a ridge across from where he was bedded with another buck of equal size.

(continued on page 9)

Washington and Other Western States Hunting License Cost

George Tsukamoto, Staff Biologist

One of the most frequent complaints we receive is the rising cost of hunting license, tag and other fees. I examined the hunting license fee structure for the eleven western states to get a comparative look at the basic cost of hunting for resident and nonresident hunters. But, first some background information.

State wildlife agencies across the country have similar hunting license fee schedule as Washington. The user pay program in the United States has been a successful model for the world. The user pay arrangement helps to support state wildlife agencies in accomplishing their mission to preserve, protect and perpetuate the wildlife resource for the public good.

Individual states receive federal aid as authorized by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937. Revenues from a federal excise tax on the sales of firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment is apportioned back to the State based on the size of the state and the number of licensed hunters in each state. Federal aid funds must be matched by non-federal dollars at a ratio of 25% state to 75% federal aid.

According to the 1996 National Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Survey only 4% of the population participates in hunting in the States of Washington, Oregon, California, and Nevada each year. The national hunting participation rate is 7%.

In 1996, Washington was ranked number three of the eleven western states in the number of licensed hunters, slightly behind Oregon in second place. California leads with over a half million participating hunters. California has the highest human population according to the 2000 census, with about 34 million residents. Hunters represent only about 1.5 percent of the population in California. Washington is a distant second and Arizona third with over 5 million residents. Wyoming is the least populated state with less than a half million residents and Montana is the second least populated state with less than 1 million residents (Table 1).

An overwhelming majority of participants hunt within their own state of residence, 13.3 million or 95 percent of all hunters in the U.S. according to the National Survey (1996). In the west, several states provide considerable nonresident hunting opportunity. The States of Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, and Idaho allow over 25% nonresidents. Wyoming is unique, where nonresident deer and elk hunters outnumber resident hunters.

Currently, Washington deer tag fees are generally higher than the western states average by about 33% for residents and nonresidents. The nonresident deer tag fees have increased by about 17% from 1997. The trend nationally for a nonresident hunter is increased cost and/or less opportunity to hunt. Resident deer tag fees in the west show considerable variation, ranging from a low of $21 in Montana to a high of $64 in Nevada. However, the elk tag fees in Washington are below the west average (Table 1).

The cost of nonresident deer hunting is on the rise. Since 1997 deer hunting fees have risen approximately 18% for resident hunters in the western states (Table 2). Nonresident deer hunting fees have also risen approximately 20% for the same period.

The deer hunting cost differential between resident and nonresident vary widely ($167 in Arizona to $444 in Washington). Nonresident fees are always higher than resident fees, however, there is no apparent standard. The highest differential between resident and nonresident deer hunting fees is found in Montana where nonresidents pay 15.3 times the amount residents do. The western states average 7.3 times higher than residents

Table 1 A Comparison of Resident and Nonresident Information by State.

State	Residency	Population 2000 census	% of population hunters	# of Hunters (1996)*	% non-residents	Application Fee & (Other fees)	License/Tag Fee Deer	License/Tag Fee Elk
AZ	Resident	5,130,632	3	149,000		$5.00	$25.50/$17.50	$25.50/ $71.50
	Nonresident			18,000	12	$5.00	$78.50/$83.50	$78.50/$371.00
CA	Resident	33,871,648	2	505,000		$2.00-6.50	$31/$17.95	$31/$286.75
	Nonresident			10,800	1	$2.00-6.50	$107.90/$182	n/a
CO	Resident	4,301,261	6	237,000		$3.00	$20.25	$30.25
	Nonresident			217,000	48	$3.00	$285.25	$470.25
ID	Resident	1,293,953	14	183,000		$6.50	$11.50/$18	$11.50/$28.50
	Nonresident			65,000	9	$6.50	$128.50/$234.50	$128.50/338.50
MT	Resident	902,195	16	141,000		$3.00 ($2 access) ($4 cons.deer)	$13.00	$16.00
	Nonresident			54,000	28	$6.00 ($10 access) ($7 cons.elk)	$628.00deer/elk combination	$628.00deer/elk combination
NM	Resident	1,819,046	5	88,000		$6.00 ($3 damage)	$24.00	$61.00
	Nonresident			9,000	9	$6.00 ($10 damage)	$181or$301	$466or$751
NV	Resident	1,998,257	2	46,000		$10 deer,$15 elk ($3 predator)	$24/$25	$24/$100
	Nonresident			6,000	12	$10 deer,$15 elk ($3 predator)	$111/$200	$111/$1,000
OR	Resident	3,421,399	8	272,000		$4.50	$17.50/$14.50	$17.50/$29.50
	Nonresident			21,000	7	$4.50	$58.50/$191.50	$58.50/$306.50
UT	Resident	2,233,169	4	79,000		$5.00	$35or$48	$60or$180
	Nonresident			30,000	21	$5.00	$208or$408	$333or$483
WA	**Resident**	**5,894,121**	**4**	**256,000**		**$5.00**	**$39.42**	**$39.42**
	Nonresident			**15,000**	**6**	**$50.00**	**$394.20**	**$394.20**
WY	Resident	493,782	14	67,000		$3.00	$25.00	$35.00
	Nonresident			69,000	51	$10	$200.00	$400.00
Avg.	Resident					$5.00	$23.84	$70.66
	Nonresident					$5.00	$237.50	$453.13

*1966 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, includes all hunters.

Table 2. Deer hunting fee increases and cost differential between resident and nonresident

State	Resident/ Nonresident	Deer (license, tag, & other fees) 1997	Deer (license, tag, & other fees) 2002	Resident/nonresident costdifferential 2002	%increase since1997
AZ	Resident	$ 35.50	$ 48.00		26.0%
	Non-Res.	$ 167.00	$ 167.00	3.5	0%
CA	Resident	$ 44.90	$ 50.95		11.9%
	Non-Res.	$ 257.25	$ 291.90	5.7	11.9%
CO	Resident	$ 20.25	$ 23.25		12.9%
	Non-Res.	$ 150.25	$ 288.25	12.4	47.9%
ID	Resident	$ 18.00	$ 36.00		50.0%
	Non-Res	.$ 328.00	$ 369.50	10.3	11.2%
MT	Resident	$ 17.00	$ 22.00		22.7%
	Non-Res.	$ 245.00	$ 337.00	15.3	27.3%
NV	Resident	$ 49.00	$ 59.00		16.9%
	Non-Res.	$ 266.00	$ 321.00	5.4	17.1%
NM	Resident	$ 23.00	$ 33.00		30.3%
	Non-Res.	$ 180.00	$ 197.00	6.0	8.6%
OR	Resident	$ 26.00	$ 36.50		26.0%
	Non-Res.	$ 229.00	$ 254.50	7.0	10.0%
UT	Resident	$ 50.00	$ 40.00		18%
	Non-Res.	$ 198.00	$ 213.00	5.3	7.5%
WA	Resident	$ 34.50	$ 44.42		22.3%
	Non-Res.	$ 211.50	$ 444.20	10.0	47.0%
WY	Resident	$ 25.00	$ 25.00		0%
	Non-Res.	$ 210.00	$ 210.00	8.4	0%
Avg.	Resident	$ 31.20	$ 38.01		17.9%
	Non-Res.	$ 222.00	$ 281.21	7.4	21.0%

Hunter Ethics

(continued from page 5)

The survey responses did report some additional significant findings:
Both the general public and hunters felt that conflicts between hunters and non-hunters have been relatively minor.
A strong majority of the public felt that hunting is a safe activity.
When the general public was asked what information they used to base their response about hunter behavior, 76 percent said direct observation, physical evidence, or word of mouth.
While the general public supports requiring hunter refresher courses, hunters do not.
Of the general public that said hunter behavior was poor or fair, seventy-one percent said that an additional training requirement would improve their opinion of hunters.

So what do these findings mean in terms of WDFW management? Further effort is needed by WDFW to document compliance rates for common violations and then to develop strategies to improve compliance. In addition, the basis for the public's perception needs to be better identified so that it can be addressed. An example comes from work done in other states where increased frequency of contact or response and presence of officers (physical deterrent) was important in improved public perception of safety and enforcement.

Much of the general public's perception of hunters comes from relatively direct experience with hunters or from friends and acquaintances experiences with hunters (word of mouth). In addition, conflict between hunters and non-hunters is considered relatively minor. This information supports continued strong emphasis in hunter education efforts and diligence by hunters when in the field.

The WDFW initiated a voluntary Advanced Hunter Education (AHE) program several years ago in response to private landowner conflicts with hunters. The idea was that greater training effort would be positively received by landowners and would create added hunting opportunities on private land for AHE graduates. The reception by landowners was minimal and there was no new funding or emphasis by the Department. This has resulted in minimal participation by hunters. Re-invigorating the AHE program may help address public support for additional hunter training and public opinion of hunters.

When Do You Hunt...

(continued from page 7)When it got light they were already bedded in the sage. Around 10:30 AM they both got up and moved about 20 yards to a new bed and during that time they were only up for about five minutes. Then they got up again at 12:30 PM and fed for about 20 minutes, never moving more then 20 yards from where they were bedded. That afternoon they got up two more times and fed for 10 to 15 minutes each time, then rebedded. From 3:00 PM until dark they never got up again. If I had gone out just doing a quick glassing session in the morning and evening, I never would have seen these bucks. It's this midday effort that eventually led to the harvest of my best mulie thus far.

A few years ago I was hunting the timber country of Northern Idaho for mule deer. I had worked my way up a timbered ridge, until I got to the alpine ridge top. I continued to work my way along the ridge about 11:00 I decided to rest for a couple of hours and hunt back down the ridge to the road. I found a spot in a low to the ground fir where I could sit on the edge of the timber and just enjoy the solitude of the area. About noon a doe ran out into the opening about 20 yards from me, a couple of minutes later a buck came out. That's all it took. A nice 26" four point was mine.

If I had to pick one time of day to hunt I would still pick the mornings, but I would try to stretch them out through midday, because you never know, that big buck just might find you.

Cooperation Is Key When Dealing With Tribal Hunting Issues

Richard Stone

WDFW is working hard to develop cooperative approaches to implement tribal hunting requirements. Cooperative approaches save valuable time and money that can be better spent managing and improving big and small game species. Cooperative approaches also lessen the risks associated with court proceedings and lawsuits.

During the 1850s the federal government negotiated a series of treaties with northwest Indian tribes. In return for giving up claims to ownership of most of the lands that make up Washington State, the treaty retains for the tribes "the privilege of hunting on open and unclaimed lands." Like fishing, hunting is an important part of the culture of the northwest tribes. Hunting provides food and is an important part of tribal religious and cultural practices. Tribal governments around the northwest take the issue of hunting very seriously.

Figuring out how to implement tribal hunting opportunity, and how this fits with WDFW management and non-tribal opportunity has been difficult. As you

(continued on page 10)

Game Damage Hunts

Steve Dauma, Fish and Wildlife Lieutenant

Revised Code of Washington 77.36.005 (2) states, "...(T)he state recognizes the importance of commercial agricultural and horticultural crop production and the value of healthy deer and elk populations, which can damage such crops. The legislature further finds that damage prevention is key to maintaining healthy deer and elk populations, wildlife-related recreational opportunities, and commercially productive agricultural and horticultural crops, and that state, participants in wildlife recreation, and private landowners and tenants share the responsibility for damage prevention. Toward this end, the legislature encourages landowners and tenants to contribute through their land management practices to healthy wildlife populations and to provide access for related recreation. It is in the best interests of the state for the department of fish and wildlife to respond quickly to wildlife damage complaints and to work with these landowners and tenants to minimize and/or prevent damages and conflicts while maintaining deer and elk populations for enjoyment by all citizens of the state."

In keeping with this finding of the Washington State Legislature, WDFW staff, mainly enforcement officers devote considerable effort to addressing conflicts that arise between the citizens of the state and deer and elk. This activity includes a broad range of activities from providing advice or herding and hazing efforts to investigating and approving payment of claims for damage to commercial crops.

During calendar year 2000, 56 claims were submitted asking for $101,444 in payment for damages. During the 2001 calendar year, the number of claims rose to 64, a modest 14% increase over the previous year. However, the amount of damages claimed increased by nearly 450% to $558,463. Of that amount, $322,952 was paid. Clearly, when herding and hazing efforts are ineffective in abating a damage situation, methods other than paying damages are needed.

Recognizing the necessity for other alternatives, the Legislature granted to the Department of Fish and Wildlife the authority to remove or kill wildlife that is destroying or injuring property. (Revised Code of Washington 77.12.240) Relying upon that authority, the Department of Fish and Wildlife instituted other tools having the goal of removing the deer or elk that are causing damage. These damage hunts are applied in a cooperative effort with the Department resource managers and are given consideration in the various herd management plans.

There are five types of damage hunts – damage control permit hunts, kill permits, landowner preference permits, hot spot hunts, and landowner damage access permits. The different hunts are necessary for the Department to have the flexibility to respond to the differing circumstances of each damage situation. Any single hunt type may not be effective for every damage situation.

Damage Control Permit Hunts

Damage control permit hunts are established under the structure of special permit hunts and published in the big game hunting seasons and rules pamphlet. Any hunter having a license and transport tag may apply. Since the hunt occurs on private property, permittees may not be familiar with the area and may have difficulty obtaining access. Not all of the property owners in the permit area may allow access. These hunts are generally limited to antlerless deer or elk.

Due to the lag time between the occurrence of the damage and the opening of the season, the landowner may continue to experience damage. By the time the permit season opens, the problem animals may not be present.

This type of damage hunt could not be used in damage areas of very limited acreage. Because of the potential for ongoing damage, the landowner may still file a claim for payment of game damage. Also, this type of hunt does not lend itself to emergent damage situations.

Kill Permits

A kill permit may be issued to the owner or tenant of real property who is experiencing damage of any type and other alternatives have been ineffective. The Department during any time of the year may authorize these permits. The permit targets specific animals that are causing the damage and are generally limited to one or two animals.

The usefulness of these permits may be limited. The small number of animals removed may not alleviate the damage. Damage caused by a large number of deer or elk or occurring on larger acreages would likely not be impacted under a kill permit. Some people may be unwilling or unable to kill an animal. For qualifying damage, the landowner may still file a claim for payment of game damage. Since the animal killed cannot be retained by the permittee, timely care and disposition of the carcass may be problematic.

Landowner Preference Permits

For damage to a commercial crop, the landowner may be issued a preference permit. This permit enables the landowner to kill an antlerless deer or elk on the property that is experiencing the damage. This privilege may also be extended to an immediate family member. The permittee is not required to have a hunting license or transport tag and may retain the animal for personal use. Like the kill permit, the specific animal(s) causing the damage are targeted.

While the use of the permit would not resolve a major damage situation, the retention of the animal may be perceived by the landowner as compensation for the loss experienced. Even though the damage must be verified by a Fish and Wildlife Officer, the use of a landowner preference permit may be perceived as a loss of license revenue and of recreational opportunity.

The permit is very specific in that it targets only those animals causing damage, only on the property where the damage is occurring, and during the time the damage is ongoing. These permits are not available for use during April, May, and June.

Hot Spot Hunts

Hot spot hunts may be conducted when there are recurring complaints of damage caused by deer or elk that are received from several landowners in a locale. Participants are drawn from the most current list available of unsuccessful permit deer or elk applicants from the nearest permit unit and must have a hunting license and valid deer or elk transport tag. Hot spot hunts may not be conducted during April, May, or June.

Hot spot hunts are structured to target problem animals on private property where damage is occurring and in close proximity to the time during which damage is occurring. The success of a hot spot hunt may avert claims for payment of deer or elk damage, however, there is nothing that would prevent a landowner from applying for payment for damages experienced.

Hot spot hunts may result in a significant workload for Fish and Wildlife Officers. Due to the difficulty in defining and identifying hunt area boundaries and private property boundaries, officers may end up essentially guiding permittees. An additional issue may be directing permittees to the current location of targeted animals. Even the identification and contact of eligible hunters may be very time consuming.

Landowner Damage Access Permits

The final type of damage hunt is the landowner damage access permit. Damage to commercial crops must be occurring and the damage must be verified. A landowner waives the right to apply for payment for game damage upon acceptance of these permits. Typically, a landowner receives a specific number of permits and transfers each permit to a licensed hunter of his/her choosing. The total number of permits for deer and for elk per year is established in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC 232-12-266).

Landowner damage access permits direct hunting pressure on the animals causing the damage on the property where the damage is occurring and while the damage is being done. Access to private property and identification of the hunt area are not problematic since the landowner selects the hunters. The landowner has the right to require the return of the permit if a hunter is not successful or causes any problems for the landowner.

The landowner who receives these permits may not sell the permits. However, he/she may charge a fee for access to his/her property. The ability to charge a fee for access to private property extends to any landowner at any time or during any season.

Damage hunts are just other tools available to the Department of Fish and Wildlife to be used in an effort to respond to wildlife damage complaints. They provide flexibility and recreational opportunity. They serve a critical function of reducing the state's liability for paying for damage cause by deer and elk. They are not a solution of every damage situation.

Cooperation is Key...

(continued from page 9)

might imagine there are different interpretations about what all this means. The rules for treaty fishing rights are much clearer, mainly because there were a whole series of court rulings in the 1970s and 80s that provided a much clearer definition of the operating rules. Hunting issues have lagged behind fishing and there have been fewer court cases and thus definition of the rules. WDFW and the tribes have been trying to learn from the lessons of the fishing issues and develop better ways of proceeding on hunting.

There are a number of examples that show how this cooperative spirit can work. WDFW, the Muckleshoot Tribe, and a host of volunteers relocated over 80 elk from the Chehalis Valley where they were causing damage to local farms to the Green River watershed. The elk population in the Green River has been declining and the transplant should provide a much-needed boost. The tribe paid much of the cost of the operation and they will provide much of the monitoring of long-term survival. WDFW provided capture expertise and helped organize the strong volunteer turnout. A similar cooperative approach for the North Cascades elk herd is in the planning stage.

WDFW and the tribes have been cooperating on the development of herd plans for Washington's elk herds. These spell out the goals for each herd and some of the steps that will be needed to recover and maintain the health of each herd.

Rather than spending time in court WDFW, county prosecutors from several counties, and tribes from the Medicine Creek treaty area (south Puget Sound) took part in a mediation process to help create a working definition of the southern boundary of the Medicine Creek hunting area. Differing accounts of the treaty process and other documents from that time lead to different interpretations of the boundary. The mediation process lead to a working agreement that will simplify enforcement, lessen the burden on county prosecutors, and create a better working relationship with tribal governments.

These are just a few examples of how working together in a cooperative fashion can allow us all to focus on the important issues of improving and managing our wildlife resources.

Forest Grouse in Washington

Mick Cope, Upland Bird Section Manager

Grouse hunting in Washington can take you from the lowland riparian areas of western Washington to the sub-alpine areas of the Cascade Range. Ruffed grouse are usually found in the lower elevations and reside in both eastern and western Washington. Blue grouse can also be found in both western and eastern Washington and are birds of varied habitats. In western Washington, blue grouse are almost strictly a forest dwelling bird while in eastern Washington; they are usually found in or near forest openings and edges. Interestingly, blue grouse can also be found in areas usually associated with prairie grouse in the springtime. The third species of forest grouse found in Washington, the spruce grouse, is usually found at higher altitudes associated with spruce forest and sub-alpine terrain.

Ruffed Grouse

Forest grouse populations rely heavily on yearly production of chicks to sustain their populations, This annual production is often tied to the weather, as cold wet springs have a devastating effect on chicks that cannot keep warm once they are wet. Even though grouse have a high mortality rate, researchers have documented individuals living 9 to 14 years in the wild . While this is certainly not the norm, it does show that these birds can live a long time.

Pursuing grouse can be one of the most challenging types of hunting around. Despite the nickname of "fool's hen", many place on grouse, they can be a challenging hunt, especially if shot on the wing, Blue and spruce grouse often require substantial hikes into forested areas, and hunting ruffed grouse in a heavily wooded creek bottom can be tricky. No matter which species you decide to pursue, one thing is certain – finding one is often much easier than actually getting a shot at one.

Blue Grouse

In their Book *Birds of Oregon* Dr. Ira Gabrielson and Stanley Jewett wrote the following about ruffed grouse; "...it soon develops an almost uncanny knack of bursting into full flight at the most inopportune moments; that is, from the hunters' point of view. It seems always to launch into the air behind a tree or to dodge quickly behind one, or else to choose the moment when the hunter is entangled in a fence. These tricks make wing shooting of ruffed grouse the highest test of a hunter's skill and give the bird its reputation as one of the sportiest game birds."

Spruce Grouse

Mountain Goat Study Launched

Cliff Rice, Research biologist

In May 2002, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife launched a study on mountain goats in Washington. The study will have two main objectives: to standardize and improve methods for estimating mountain goat populations; and investigate the causes of mountain goat population declines.

Mountain goats are distribute irregularly in Washington from the Canadian border, south along the Cascades Mountains to Mount Adams, and in the Olympic Mountains. However, goat numbers have been declining in many areas while the reasons for this remain unclear. The number of goat units with permits and the number of permits in open units has been reduced commensurately. Understanding why numbers have declined may enable us to recover populations, which will result in more viewing and hunting opportunity for the public.

The Department is currently in the process of organizing funding for this effort and selecting the best study areas. Cooperative arrangements are being developed with the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, Washington universities, and Sauk-Suiattle Tribe.

Fall Turkey Hunting Permits Multiplied in Northeast

Madonna Luers

Fall turkey hunting permits have doubled, tripled, and even quadrupled in some areas of northeast Washington where wild turkey populations have increased to the point of becoming a nuisance to landowners.

In Stevens County, permits jumped from last year's 300 to a whopping 1,000. Ferry County doubles from 50 permits to 100 and Pend Oreille County permits jump from 25 to 100. Even the Roosevelt (133) unit in Lincoln County increases from 75 permits to 100 for this fall's hunt.

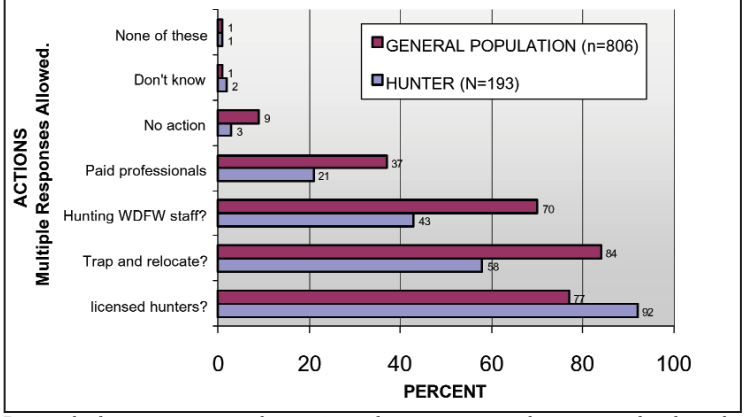
Hunters who missed the late June application deadline for these permits might still take note for the general season (non-permit) hunt next spring. The fall either-sex hunt is controlled by permit to prevent excessive harvest of hens. The spring hunt during the breeding season is for gobblers only so it tends to be more difficult. The fall permit hunt offers hunters extra opportunity that is only offered when populations are thriving.

Most turkey habitat in northeast Washington tends to be in the valleys and foothills where land ownership is generally private. Hunters need to direct much of their time and effort toward gaining access to private lands or acquiring good maps, such as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maps (360-902-1234), that show the many scattered public ownerships that provide potential for a hunt.

Fall turkey permits were also issued at the same levels as last year in southeast Washington (50) and southcentral Washington's Klickitat and Skamania counties (75).

Only hunters who had not harvested two turkeys in eastern Washington during the Spring 2002 hunt were eligible to apply. The application deadline for the fall season was June 23, 2002. The permit season is Oct. 1-5 for shotgun or archery equipment only.

Figure 1. Actions you would support to reduce predator populations



During the last century many changes in predator management have occurred and yet the issue remains controversial. Through it all one thing is clear; people have strong feelings about wildlife whether they are hunters or not and whether they live in a rural or urban setting. The proponents of predator control feel they have a right to protect their property and the safety of their family and pets. Some hunters take the view that for every animal killed by a predator there is one less animal available for the hunters bag. The opponents of predator control feel equally strong that predators, particularly large carnivores, are a necessary component of a healthy and natural ecosystem. Our recent public opinion survey indicates predator management remains controversial but we are making progress.

A View of the Past

George Tsukamoto, Staff Biologist

A quote from the Second Biennial Report of the Washington State Game Commission 1934-1935 introduced the big game metal seal.

" Big Game Seal Revenue Pays Bounties
A sweeping change in the financing of predatory bounties whereby big game tags were supplied for payment for predatory control was enacted at the 1935 session of the state legislature. The Department of Game now has a fund expressly set aside for the payment of bounties, which is not contingent with, or dependent upon, the game fund supported from regular hunting and fishing license sales. Hunters bent on big game expeditions purchased their first metal tags in the fall of 1935."

A review of historical records shows that deer and elk seals were sold for 50 cents from 1935 through 1952. From 1953 through 1955 the seal cost $1 for deer and $5.50 for elk. In 1957 the big game seal was increased to $2 for deer and $7.50 for elk. In 1958, the metal seal was eliminated and replaced by a paper punch tag, which has been used ever since.

Hunters' Opinions About Private Lands Programs and Hunter Access

Dave Ware, Game Division Manager

Opinion surveys conducted by Responsive Management in January/February 2002 included several questions about private lands and the closely related issue of hunter access. These were both identified as important issues during a public involvement process in 2001.

Hunters strongly agreed with the importance of private lands for wildlife management and for hunting access. Most hunters also support providing incentives to private landowners in exchange for habitat enhancements and access.

Hunters also agreed that access to private lands is important, even if fees are charged. The majority of hunters said they would be willing to pay a fee for access to private land, (except turkey hunters) and they were willing to pay more than $6 per day for this access. Although willingness to pay declined quickly when the fee exceeded $10 per day.

Hunters also felt that WDFW should develop programs to pursue public access through easements, cooperative programs, and walk-in-only programs.

Road closures were identified as important to hunters for controlling hunter numbers, reducing illegal activity, and reducing impacts to wildlife. Hunters expressed support for cooperative road management systems, temporary hunting closure areas, closure during critical times of year, and designating refuges to maintain game species in local areas.

There is fairly strong support from hunters for a variety of landowner programs. WDFW has been involved in many programs over the years; some have been more successful than others. Even with these existing programs, hunters and landowners would like to see more. Recent closures of private industrial timberlands in southwest Washington, limited waterfowl hunting access in western Washington, limited pheasant hunting access in eastern Washington, extensive road management systems in south central Washington, agricultural damage concerns across the state, and a lack of information about access to public lands and WDFW lands has resulted in many questions and concerns from hunters and landowners.

Based on the strong support identified in the opinion survey, several strategies are being developed in the Game Management Plan to review and modify existing private lands programs, to expand some programs, and to develop new ones.